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Press Release

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Security Council continues consultations to review implementation of resolution 687 (1991).

- Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights describes past year as one of serious challenges to basic principles of international relations and respect for human rights.

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The Security Council this afternoon continued consultations to review Iraq's implementation of resolution 687 (1991) that set the conditions for a cease-fire in the Persian Gulf conflict -- in particular the paragraphs that concern Iraq's nuclear capability.

Speaking to correspondents following the consultations, Thomas R. Pickering, United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations, said the Council was close to coming up with a draft resolution dealing with Iraq's nuclear violations. In addition, he said, the Council was preparing a resolution which would allow Iraq to export oil in order to meet humanitarian needs.

In a related development, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) yesterday called Iraq's failure to declare its plutonium programme to the Agency "clear non-compliance" with its safeguards agreement.

Iraq recently provided details of the programme to the nuclear inspection team which is currently in that country. The information concerned details of experimental activities that involved the separation of 3 grams of plutonium -- a potential nuclear-weapons-usable material -- from irradiated fuel rods.

Although Iraq had already reported these activities to IAEA in June, the Agency said that Iraq's "failure to declare the activities in a timely fashion" under its safeguards agreement constitutes clear non-compliance.

In other news from the region, Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar has denied having any contact with the Islamic Jihad concerning the release of

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the remaining Western hostages in Lebanon. However, he told correspondents today that he would be willing to meet with representatives of the Islamic Jihad to discuss the issue, either in New York or elsewhere.

The Secretary-General is scheduled to go to Geneva at the end of the week to meet with United Nations agencies to discuss relief operations in Iraq and the rest of the Gulf.

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Opening the forty-third session of the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities in Geneva on Monday, Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights, Jan Martenson, described the past year as one of serious challenges to the basic principles of international relations and respect for human rights.

Mr. Martenson stated that in the aftermath of the Gulf war, concrete steps had been taken to protect the human rights of the vulnerable groups in the area.

Also addressing the opening meeting, the newly elected President of the Subcommission for this year, Louis Joinet of France, stressed the importance of the Subcommission's independent character. He said it would examine situations which revealed a consistent pattern of violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in any country, including the latest developments in South Africa, the occupied territories in the Middle East, Iran and El Salvador.

During the session, which will last three weeks, participants will discuss, among other things, questions of racial and religious discrimination; discrimination against indigenous people; the existence of contemporary forms of slavery and human rights; and the administration of justice.

A principal subsidiary body of the Commission on Human Rights, the Subcommission consists of 26 human rights experts including law professors, jurists and lawyers, who are selected from the five geographical regions of the world but are serving in their individual capacities.

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